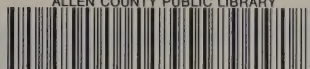


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THE LEBANON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE LIFE OF WILLIAM RANK

BY

FREDERIC K. MILLER

PRESIDENT OF LEBANON VALLEY COLLEGE

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PREFACE

On the second floor of our Society building is a box which contains, among other things, thirty small black volumes. Not very interesting at first glance, only idle curiosity would prompt one to take a second look. However, giving way to curiosity one day, I selected a volume at random. It was apparent immediately that these volumes were a series of diaries. This discovery was extremely interesting, for up to this time these diaries are the only ones pertaining to Lebanon County which are in the possession of our society. Now diaries have something of the atmosphere of a serial mystery story about them. The reading of one days entry makes it imperative to read the next, until gradually there unfolds the life history of the diarist. So, after several months of intensive reading, there was presented the life-history of a man who had done much for our county; a history which needs re-telling.

Many diaries, it is true, tell only a limited story, they give only one viewpoint, and frequently a biased one at that. These diaries proved to be an exception to the rule. Rarely does this diarist chronicle a word of criticism or condemnation, factual to the extreme, they do shed a light on the history of our county that would be hard to find elsewhere. The period covered by these diaries is a most interesting one. Beginning on January 1, 1851 they were faithfully kept until 1881. This period, you will recognize, covers the years preceding, during, and following the Civil War. In these years we were growing as an agricultural and industrial nation. Our county shared in this period of growth, as these diaries clearly show.

This paper, then, is an attempt to relate the life of the diarist William Rank, and to tell something of the part he played in developing our county.

FREDERIC K. MILLER

THE LIFE OF WILLIAM RANK

You may well ask "who was William Rank"? True, he is not usually included in lists of prominent men of our county. Not a Shultze in politics nor a Coleman in industry, and our county is justly proud of them, William Rank nevertheless illustrates the type of man who in his quiet and unobtrusive way helped to build our county and nation in the difficult years of the 19th century.

When in the course of his busy life he began to keep a diary is not known. As has been noted the first which has been preserved is his record for 1851. On the first page of the Diary for that year is recorded this objective — "A remark of the weather in every day of the year entered daily by W. Rank." This objective was met not only in 1851, but in every succeeding year. Weather conditions, and thermometer readings are seldom omitted. Fortunately for us, his diary includes much additional information on political, social, and industrial events. It is from these records that this paper was written. No attempt has been made to present an exhaustive study of William Rank and the times in which he lived. But rather an attempt has been made to select from the diaries and items from contemporary newspapers, those things which may prove to be of interest, and all of which show that a man need not be "famous" in the ordinary meaning of the term to have been of benefit to his community. The life of William Rank was a useful life. Lebanon County and other communities were greatly indebted to him for many varied civic activities.

William, the son of John Peter and Eva Mosher Rank, was born October 19, 1795 in Jonestown, then in Dauphin County. The first ten years of his life were spent in Jonestown, after which he was employed for eight years as a clerk by Andrew Shultz in Myerstown. In 1813 he returned to Jonestown to

manage a store owned by his father. After thus serving his father for a few years he spent several years in Bucks county also in the mercantile business, following which he again returned to Jonestown to become a merchant.

On December 26, 1819, Rank was married to Miss Eve Brunner, the daughter of Henry and Barbara Kern Brunner. To William and Eve were born nine children, Wilhelmena, Pamela, Angelina, Margaret, Cyrus P., William H., Erastus P. Titus H., and two other children who died in infancy.¹ There remained all through his life a very close relationship between William and his family. Scarcely a week goes by without a visit of the parents to one of the children or a visit by the children to their parents. At times when the distances between them were too great to permit visits, contact was maintained by letters, the sending and receiving of which is constantly noted in the diary.

In the early years of his life in addition to clerking activities Rank found time to learn surveying, serving as deputy surveyor for Lebanon County for many years. The diaries record many trips taken for surveying purposes, including surveys made for the Colemans at Cornwall.²

As a young man he showed his patriotism during the War of 1812 by organizing a company of volunteers for service against England. The War ended, though, before his company was needed.

In 1844, Rank purchased a farm near Bunker Hill and from then on until his death, except for a two year residence in the town of Lebanon, 1853-1855, he and his family called that farm their home. The farm remained his primary interest. So it is not surprising to find many references in the diaries to farms, farming practices of his time, and the social life led by him and

1. Egle, *History of Lebanon County*, 289.

2. Diary, 1853, July 22-23.

his family, many interesting items are recorded, a few of which have been selected to illustrate farming and farm life in the third quarter of the 19th century.

By his records it is possible, for instance, to chart the years activities on the Rank farm, insofar as farm work is concerned. Rank, his sons and the hired men began to plow at the end of February or the beginning of March. From that time until the end of October there was little rest for any on the farm. April was given over to sowing and planting; May to "plastering" corn, harrowing and shearing sheep; June to haymaking; July to cutting, thrashing, and cleaning grain; August to thrashing; September to cutting corn, thrashing, making cider and apple-butter.... October to husking corn, sowing grain and burying fruits; November to butchering; December to thrashing and cleaning grain. This, to be sure, is a very general picture of the year on the Rank farm.

Between all of these activities there were what must have been regarded as activities for spare times: Gardens to be made, fences to be built or repaired, dung to be hauled, soap to be boiled, implements to be taken to the smith shop, newly born calves to be cared for, and the many other details which occupy the farmer from sunrise to sunset the year round.

Another indication of the care which Judge Rank gave to his farm is to be seen in the way in which he rotated his crops. Crop rotation was nothing new in the second half of the 19th century. Just as Rank was a careful diarist, so too was he careful to rotate his crops in the most beneficial way. All of his fields were either named or numbered in the diary. He had, for example, "Number 2" field; "Number 3" field; and the "grave yard" field.¹ Hence it is possible to learn how he rotated his crops in these fields over a period of years. With few exceptions the rotation was corn, oats, wheat, rye, followed by clover, timothy.

1. Others were "Hill-field"; "Cherry field"; "Old Orchard".

or use of the field for pasture. This intelligent use of his fields greatly added to their productiveness.

It is frequently said that as late as the 19th century the American farmer was almost self-sufficient; that the farmer could raise or barter for almost all of his requirements. Excluding such items as sugar and salt the diaries show that Rank could and did produce most of the articles he needed. For in addition to raising food, he built his house and barns with timber from his own woodland. Clothing and shoes could also be secured by direct barter for his flax, wool and hides. In this connection it may prove to be of interest to note that in addition to the customary crops as mentioned above, a considerable amount of flax was raised by William Rank. The flaxseed was sown in April and pulled in July. The seeds were removed, cleaned, and taken to a mill where they were pressed to secure linseed oil. The plant itself was used in the making of linen. In a process known as "retting" the stem was steeped or soaked to separate the fibers from the woody pith of the stem. This separating process was called "scutching". After the fibers were removed and cleaned, known as "hackling", they were converted into linen. Shorter fibers called "tow" which were produced in the hackling and scutching were made into ribbon. It is not possible to determine how much of this process was done on the farm. Our diarist does record, however, that after pulling the flax, it was cleaned and scutched.¹ It is likely that the seeds were then taken to one of the nearby oil mills and the fibers taken to a linen mill where they could be exchanged for linen cloth.

The wool produced on the Rank farm was also used to supply clothing for the family. After the sheep were sheared, the wool was taken to a weaver. One weaver to which Rank went was Christian Good.¹ Good was located on Market Street, North Lebanon, "3 houses north of the U. B. Church". He

1. went for scutching mill at Wagoners'. Diary, 1864, August 31, Diary, 1864, October 6.

carded wool and made wool into cloth, flannel, blankets and cassimeres.¹ Another weaver to whom Rank sent wool was Lyon Lunberger, whose "Cloth Manufactory", as it was called, was located in East Hanover Township, two miles northwest of Harper's Inn.²

The trees found on the Rank farm were used to supply lumber needed for the building or repairing of houses and barns. The bark was used to establish credit at one of the nearby tanners.³ This credit plus that established by hides which were also sent to the tannery was then used to secure articles of leather at any time they were needed. For example, on August 1, 1868, Rank notes that he settled with Arndt⁴ to \$211.75." Rec'd cash \$70.00 check \$125, and a Cr(edit) on Book of Arndt \$16.75. Nine months later, on May 8, 1869, he records that he "got shoes at I. Boltz gave him an order for Arndt for \$6.35."

The methods used in farming is a familiar story. It is necessary here to record only that the traditional implements were used and that changes were introduced very slowly.

On the Rank farm thrashing was done by the use of the flail until after the Civil War. However, for the purpose of cleaning the grain Rank mentions the use of a "machine", which likely refers to a fanning mill and of course was operated by hand. It was not until September, 1873, that our diarist records having employed several men to "thrash with steamer."⁵ The flail too was used in this and succeeding years, but only occasionally. The back-breaking work of pounding the grain was fast coming to an end, and thrashing by "steamer" became the usual method.

1. *Lebanon Courier* April 28, 1864.

2. *Lebanon Courier*; *Lebanon Advertiser*; various dated, 1850-1860; Diary, 1852, March 22, May 13, May 20.

3. There was one located at Swatara Bridge—Diary, 1862, December 19.

4. Previously referred to as a tanner.

5. Diary, 1873. See also receipt dated Dec. 12, 1876.

Thus as a farmer, Judge Rank gives every indication of having been an excellent tiller of the soil.¹ Careful, methodical, and thrifty, he typifies the individual who in the 19th century was frequently called "the backbone of the nation."

His interest in things agricultural is also to be seen in his frequent references to correspondence with the State and Federal Bureaus of Agriculture, the frequent notes on agricultural practices scattered throughout the Diaries, his trips to Agricultural Fairs throughout the state and more particularly to his interest and activities in the founding and continuing the Lebanon County Agricultural Society.

On May 19, 1855, a meeting was held in the Lebanon County Court House for the purpose of organizing an Agricultural Society.² A temporary organization was affected but after a second meeting interest seemed to wane, so it was not until 1858 that the project of a society was again considered. On May 4, an informal meeting held in the "public house of John M. Mark",³ to reorganize the Society. At this meeting it was unanimously decided to have a committee of ten appointed "for the purpose of forming a permanent organization of a Lebanon County Agricultural Society; and that said committee be also instructed to urge those interested in agriculture, the advantages to be derived from such organization." Among the men chosen for this committee was William Rank.⁴ At the next meeting called by the committee, May 29, Judge Rank presided, in the absence of the Chairman Simeon Guilford. The officers elected were, Simeon Guilford, President; Hon. William Rank and Jacob Witmer,

1. *Lebanon Courier*, October 7, 1869. That Rank was a successful grower of apples is to be seen in the following comment made by the editors of the *Lebanon Courier*, "We saw nothing at the State fair to beat them".

2. *Lebanon Courier*, May 25, 1855.

3. *Ibid.* May 7, 1858.

4. The others were Simeon Guilford, J. W. Grove, Christian Bomberger, Jacob Witmer, J. Lawrence Rightmyer, Michail Deininger, John Light (ss) Jacob Schaeffer, William Urich.

Vice-Presidents, J. L. Richtmyer, corresponding Sec.; William Uhrich, Recording Sec.; J. W. Mish, Treas.¹

Apparently Simeon Guilford found it impossible to serve, for when the next meeting was held, June 12, Rank had been elevated to the Presidency.² He continued as Pres. of the Society until 1870.

During these twelve years, which one author has called "the golden age of the agricultural fair",³ the Diaries faithfully record many activities of the Judge on behalf of the Society. In his first year as President, Rank had to supervise the organization of the First Annual Fair. That it was successful is attested to by the fact that it had to be held over for a day in addition to the scheduled three days.⁴

Then, too, during the Civil War, the Agricultural Society showed its patriotism by opening the Fair grounds to the use of the 93rd Penna. Infantry under Colonel McCarter. At the close of the War, the Society again went ahead with its Annual Fairs, under the leadership of William Rank.

This is not the place to give a detailed account of the Agricultural Society. Enough has been said to indicate William Rank's influence in one of Lebanon's familiar institutions. Unsuccessful in the early attempts to organize, the Society rapidly established itself in the twelve years of his presidency. It also offers another example of the contributions to our county made by Judge Rank.

In addition to his interest in agriculture and in the affairs of the Agricultural Society to his County, William Rank was keenly interested in politics and government. The Diaries contain scores of references to this part of his very active life.

1. *Lebanon Courier*, June 4, 1858, Diary of William Rank, May 29, 1858.

2. *Lebanon Courier*, June 18, 1858. Diary, June 12, 1858.

3. Dunaway, W. F. — *A History of Pennsylvania* (1935), 641.

4. *Lebanon Courier*, October 15, 1858.

During political campaigns there were "mass meetings" called to further the interest of one slate of candidates or another which Rank never failed to attend; "ox roasts" and "pole raisings" were also used to rouse the enthusiasm of the voters. When the party won a victory at the polls, it was only natural for a "torch-light parade" to be organized. All these found William Rank an enthusiastic participant. Then, too, our diarist notes his attendance at numerous county conventions, for in those days party nominations were made by party conventions, rather than by primary elections. From early manhood until 1858 he was a loyal member of the Democratic party. In that year, however, he broke away from his party due to its stand on slavery and became a Whig. Later he went with many Whigs of Lebanon into the Union and then into the Republican party.¹ He remained a member of the Republican party from the days of the Civil War until his death. For his loyalty to and his effective work for his party, especially in the East Hanover and Swatara region, he was rewarded with several appointive offices.

In addition to his serving as Deputy Surveyer for the County of Lebanon, he also was an active Justice of the Peace for many years. In 1816, when he was only 21 years of age, he was appointed Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue for the Tenth district of Pennsylvania.² He was also President of the Board of School Directors of Swatara Township in the 50's.³

In 1844 he was nominated by the Democratic party for a term in the State Legislature. That year, however, the Whigs won the election and Rank was defeated by his Whig opponent, Mr. John Philip Sanderson, by a vote of 2354-1827.⁴

In 1847, Rank was commissioned as an Associate Judge of the Courts of Lebanon County by Governor Francis R. Shunk.⁵

1. Egle, *op cit.*, 289.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Lebanon Courier*, Sept. 12, 1851.

4. Election Docket, 1839-1855. p. 50.

5. *Lebanon Daily Times*, July 8, 1881.

Thus was given to our diarist one of the highest offices of the county, and thus was given to William Rank, the title of "Judge" by which name he was familiarly known the rest of his life. It was during Governor Shunk's administration, though, that the long standing dispute with respect to the appointive power of the Governor over judicial offices, came to a head.¹ As a result, in 1850, the State constitution was amended to provide for the election rather than the appointment of judges, and the term of office was fixed at five years.

Consequently in the year 1851, Rank was honored by his party with the nomination for that office. The campaign of this year proved to be exceptionally "hot". Supporters and opponents of the candidates wrote letters to the editor, praising the candidate or condemning him as the case might be. Two illustrations are here given to show that in the 19th century, politics were taken seriously and also that no one could be successful in politics as Judge Rank was without creating political enemies; "Mr. Editor," writes one who was his supporter, "Permit me to commend to the people of Lebanon County, as a suitable person to fill the position of one of the Associate Judges of our County one of the present incumbents — the Hon. William Rank. He has been tried and found to possess those qualities of honesty and capability in an eminent degree, and has given the fullest satisfaction to his constituency; and I understand that in regard to the election, he leaves himself entirely in the hands of the People."²

An entirely different view of the candidate was presented by the following letter;³

"The political campaign has again opened, and permit us to assure you that the sons of Swatara have already buckled on their armor, and with a man like Bill Johnston for a leader, are ready to meet the foe on the Second Tuesday of October.

1. Dunaway, *op cit.*, p. 470.

2. *Lebanon Courier*, Sept. 5, 1851.

3. *Ibid.*, Sept. 12, 1851.

"We see published in your valuable paper a card, recommending to the people Judge Rank as a candidate for Associate Judge, and signed. "The People". We know that the card has not originated from the people among the old Whigs of Swatara, for they are aware of the bitter and artful devices to which the Judge resorted, and will resort whenever an opportunity shall present itself, in order to defeat Whig nominations, even for township offices. He leaves himself in the hands of the people, although his party by a resolution passed by their late convention, recommended him strongly to all Locos in the county. Yet on these grounds he is urged by his friends, as a volunteer candidate, in order to obtain Whig influence and to defeat Mr. Hibshman, under the cloak of a no party man.

"We cannot believe that such a mean political fraud can be practiced upon our Whig brethren in any of the townships of Lebanon County. It is a well-known fact, throughout the northern part of the county that Judge Rank has always been a Locofoco, up to the core. The Loco trap, for the purpose of catching Whig voters, which he constructed and carried about in the memorable campaign of forty, has not been forgotten and his pretended neutrality in this campaign is nothing more than a revival of the same old trap. In forty-four he took an open stand in favor of Mr. Shunk — in forty-eight he exerted all his influence in opposition to the election of Pennsylvania's favorite son, William F. Johnston, and in which contest it was he who in the capacity of President of the Board of School Directors of Swatara township, issued a decree that no Whig meeting should be held in any of the school houses of said district.

"Judge Rank has never supported a single Whig nomination for any of the offices in the county, to the truth of which every good Whig of Swatara is willing to testify. Such is the neutrality of Judge Rank in a political view — let every good Whig act now as plain duty directs.

Many Whigs."

Whatever the total political effect of such letters on the voters may have been the Whigs carried the county and Rank was defeated by about 400 voters, the successful candidates of that year being Mr. George Reidenaur and Mr. Allen P. Hibshman.¹

The next election for Associate Judges in Lebanon County occurred in 1856. In the Convention held in Lebanon on September 1, 1856, Rank again received his party's nomination for Associate Judge.²

He was successful in the ensuing election along with his colleague Mr. Gabriel Deppen. Then in 1858, you will recall, he left the ranks of the Democratic party to join the newly formed Union Party. So it was that on September 9, 1861, the Union Convention, meeting in Lebanon, nominated Rank for Associate Judge. After a campaign marked by bitterness on both sides, the Union ticket was elected including our diarist for his second consecutive term. In 1866, the "Judge" was not a candidate for public office, but in 1871 and 1876 he was nominated by the Republican party and in both cases was successful in the election.³ Thus the "Judge" had served twenty-four years in the Courts, during which time he made an enviable record. At the time of his death he was the oldest Associate Judge in Pennsylvania.

The only additional public office held by Rank of which there is any record was his selection as one of the councilmen for the borough of Lebanon in 1854-1855.

In 1819 our diarist became a member of the Phoenix Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons, in Philadelphia,⁴ and for the rest of his life he maintained an active interest in the affairs of that fraternity. In 1848 he is listed as a charter member of Mt.

1. Election Docket, 1839-1855, p. 144.

2. Diary, 1856, September 1.

3. Election Docket, 1855-1890. •

4. Lebanon Daily Times, July 8, 1881.

Lebanon Lodge No. 226, of Lebanon, being the sixth in a list of eight men who petitioned for a re-charter for the lodge which was duly granted on January 31, 1848.¹ On April 21, 1855, "On motion according to By-Laws", William Rank was constituted a Life Member of the above mentioned Masonic Lodge of Lebanon."²

In addition to being very regular in his attendance upon Masonic meetings, and assisting in funerals conducted by the Lodge, he also travelled to Philadelphia, upon numerous occasions to participate there in Masonic activities. In September, 1855, for example, he records having spent ten days in Philadelphia and while there visited the "Masonic Hall" and took part in a Masonic parade. It was on this trip too, that he paid a visit to the Institute of the Deaf and Dumb and the Academy of Natural Sciences. According to the custom of that day, he "made a deposit at both places." Another interesting experience of this trip was a day spent at Atlantic City, where, he notes, he "took a bath in Atlantic Ocean."³

During the last week of July, 1858, the town of Jonestown was visited by a band of Indians, the E. B. Denune and Co.'s Indian Troupe and Dramatic Company.⁴ It was a peaceful band, quite different from the Indians who had terrorized the countryside just a century before. But even a peaceful band of Indians was not a common sight in 1858, so it is not surprising to find the Keeper of our diary noting the event with some degree of interest. And what to Rank must have been more unusual was the fact that among these Indians was one Chief Parker whom Rank discovered to be a brother Mason!

Parker evidently impressed the Judge very favorably, for on the day following their meeting the Indian Chief spent the entire

1. Archives of the Lodge, Minute Book: this information was secured through the kindness of the late C. D. Weirick.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Diary, Sept. 21, Oct. 2, 1855. •
4. *Lebanon Courier*, July 23, 1858.

day on the Rank farm.¹ This unusual acquaintance was maintained for some time afterward by an exchange of letters between the two men.

What was in all probability his proudest evening as a Mason came on November 17, 1869, when Judge Rank celebrated the fiftieth year of his membership in the Masonic fraternity. Characteristically modest, however, he merely records "to Lebanon attended Masonic Lodge. This evening 50 years ago was made a Mason."²

One of his last requests was in regard to the part that the order (Masonic) should take in his interment, and at his death Rank was the oldest Mason in the State.³

"One other major activity in the life of our diarist needs to be recorded. That was his interest in the development of transportation in our county and state. On February 12, 1844, Rank wrote to I. Daniel Rupp, author of the well-known "History of the Counties of Berks and Lebanon". "When (you were) here, I promised to furnish you something touching our village, neighborhood, and surrounding country." After relating some of the history of Jonestown and of the Union Canal, Rank continued:⁴

"There are some superior advantages for manufacturing purposes. I would venture the prediction to say: — 'This place will some day become a manufacturing town'. We possess water power in abundance for all such purposes. Where need be more for propelling machineries of all kind? — The facilities to transport, by canal, all raw materials to, and manufactured articles, from this place, are certainly not surpassed by any in Pennsylvania. Fuel, essentials to everyone and at all times, is

1. Diary, July 25, 1858.

2. *Ibid.*, November 17, 1869.

3. *Lebanon Courier*, July 13, 1881; Egle, *op cit.*, 289.

4. Rupp, I. Daniel, *History of the Counties of Berks and Lebanon*, 351-352.

cheap and plenty, and can be readily supplied: the coal regions being not far distant. Capitalists and enterprising manufacturers would do well to give this place a serious consideration. The investment would be more than 'bank-sure'." Thus did William Rank show his interest in all things industrial and in the possible development of his own community. Though it is true he proved to be a poor prophet in predicting that Jonestown would someday become a "manufacturing town", his diary gives ample evidence of his continued interest in its development and that of his county.

Especially is this interest to be seen in the construction of railroads. For example, as early as November 1853, he records his attendance at several preliminary meetings of the Lebanon Valley Railroad and the Lancaster, Lebanon, and Pine Grove Railroad.¹ Then when construction began on these roads, he frequently went to watch the men at work, and comments in his diary as to the progress being made. The latter company, mentioned above, often referred to as the Lebanon to Tremont Railroad, was incorporated in April, 1846, but actual construction of the road was delayed for some years. At a meeting held at General Weidman's in Jonestown on February 24, 1854, Judge Rank was appointed Vice-President of the Railroad,³ and from that time on until the completion of the road his interest was intense. In 1864 actual construction was begun under the direction of the Philadelphia and Reading Company. Some two years prior to this the Branch Canal had been destroyed, thus cutting off somewhat the direct route from Lebanon to Pine Grove and the coal regions. Hence the citizens of Lebanon County were more than a little bit interested in this new road. No one was more interested in its completion than Rank. In December 1864, for instance, he participated in a conference with Mr. Nichols, Second Vice-President of the Philadelphia and Reading, and Mr. Lorenz, the Chief Engineer.⁴ For the

1. Diary, November 12, 24; December 10, 15, 1853.

2. *Lebanon Courier*, April 29, 1846.

3. *Ibid.*, March 3, Diary, 1854, February 24.

4. Diary, December 8, 1864.

succeeding six years, that is until the opening of the road to the public, the Judge was in almost constant attendance upon matters pertaining to the road. He met frequently with the engineers who located the route, accompanied them on their field trips, and watched them as they lay the trestles to bridge the Swatara,¹ all of which he carefully notes in his diary.

Finally the last rail was laid, the last spike had been driven. A gala celebration was planned for the formal opening of the road, on March 7, 1870. A special train was run from Lebanon to Pine Grove. Prominent men from all parts of the state were in attendance. On its way to Pine Grove, the train stopped at Jonestown, where some fifty interested citizens under the leadership of Judge Rank joined the party.² It must have been a "red-letter" day in the life of diarist to see the final completion of one of his pet projects."

Another enterprise in which Rank was tremendously interested was the Harrisburg and Hamburg Railroad. In the decade of the 70's this road was made a branch of a vast transportation scheme to connect Boston with the south and west, namely the South Mountain Railroad. The "H and H" was intended to connect Harrisburg with Hamburg and was to tap the coal lands of Schuylkill County. Our diarist played a very prominent role in the beginning of the construction of it. On Oct. 3, 1872, he records the following item: "First ground broken on H. and H.R.R. Went to town. A large gathering, formed line at 2 o'clock, broke ground on L. Moyer farm (I) put in the first pick."

Rank served several terms as Director of the road and so notes his attendance upon many of its meetings. Since the main office of the South Mountain Railroad was located at Jonestown and since his home community was also the intersecting point of this road and the Lebanon-Tremont road, it is little wonder that Rank felt that his predictions of 1844 were at last being realized.

1. Diary, *passim*, 1864-1870; *Lebanon Courier*, December 22, 1864.

2. *Lebanon Courier*, March 10, 1870.

We know now, of course, that these hopes and predictions were not fulfilled. Even before our diarist passed away he had to record the fact, doubtless with much sorrow, that the "S.M.R.R." property had been sold at Sheriff sale to W. Derr for two-hundred and fifty dollars.¹

In 1880, however, another branch of the vast project was started: The Pennsylvania, Poughkeepsie and New England Railroad. One part of this road was to run from Wind Gap to Penn Argyll. On April 15, 1880, the Directors formally began its construction with the usual ceremony of driving a silver spike into the first rail that was laid. The honor of driving the silver spike was given to our diarist, one of the directors of the company. This was the last official act performed for this company by the Judge.

Not all of the Judge's activities and energies, however, were devoted to interests outside the home. Cultural and educational opportunities were seldom missed and he had more than a normal interest in recording the various folk ways and folk-lore of his day and age.

Among the Judge's most prized possessions were his books and his paint box. When preparations were being made to move from the farm to the city of Lebanon, he wrote "Packed my Books and paint box." Of all the household items, these alone merited a special entry.

What types of books did a country Squire read? All too few are mentioned by exact title. The following are representative of those which were borrowed by a friend or neighbor, whose name was recorded together with the added phrase "to be returned": "Book on Governments", "Life of Lindsey", "History of Berks and Lebanon County", "Guide and History of the U.S. Mint", "Book of Queries and Customs", "Book on Surveys", "Book of Water Witchery", and "My Universal Book."

1. Diary, April 15, 1880; *Lebanon Courier*, April 21, 1880.

As early as 1856, he was reading books published by the Agricultural Department, as well as the Agricultural Reports. Judging by the frequency to which it is referred, the almanac held an important place in this home. Not only is there a record of the purchase of the new copy, but carefully entered is the name of the neighbor who "took my old almanac along to read." The almanac contained not only the conventional calendar information, but household hints, agricultural pointers, home remedies, and countless other items of interest to the rural folk.

The Courier and *The Advertiser*, the local Lebanon newspapers, were read regularly, and *Der Pennsylvanier*, the newspaper published in German. In later years the Philadelphia Inquirer, after a four month trial, was received daily. News from the Pacific coast was eagerly awaited. For this reason special notes were made when the papers from California arrived.

Books of sermons, borrowed from his pastor, were read during the long winter evenings. The church publication, *The Lutheran Observer*, provided additional fare for spiritual enrichment.

A lifetime is not too long to satisfy a mind interested in the ways and mysteries of the natural world. Not a day passed without an observation noted in apt phrase and frequently with an added miniature sketch. For the Judge was one of those rare individuals who pauses or turns aside for a closer look at the familiar or commonplace in the world about him. In the course of a day's work, while trimming the grape stock or mending a broken fence, he was alert to hear the chance note of a migrant bird in the spring of the year. Year after year he recorded the date of the first arrival of the bluebird, the robin, the blackbird, the pewee, the martins, and the swallows.

On a tramp to the forks of the Swatara his eye might catch the glint of an arrowhead which he pocketed and later added to his collection. A leisurely walk to Blue Rock or along the canal-

provided an opportunity to hear the first spring peepers or to come upon a covey of partridges. Farther afield, on a surveying trip to Gold Mine Gap, a choice mineral could be picked up, brought home and placed in his "mineral room."

Evening found him stirred by the aurora borealis or a crescent moon. Even in the dead of winter one notes the same abiding delight in the out-of-doors as evidenced by the entry "bluejays merry in the woods." The depth of the snowfall, the length of icicles, or an unusual formation — "ice on the fence like fish eggs" were worthy of a notation.

Seeing a passenger pigeon (wild pigeon as referred to by Rank) in a museum case is the nearest we will ever come to visualizing that rare vanished species. Unknowingly, Judge Rank was writing a page of ornithologic history as he noted the flying of the wild pigeons, from the earliest reference on March 9, 1852 to the last on March 31, 1875. Early in the spring of the year, sometimes while snow still covered the ground, the wild pigeons arrived on their northward journey. Hillsides with a southern exposure such as Bunker Hill provided a natural setting for these migrants. One lone reference is made to the destruction of this ill-fated species, February 13, 1858, "Lieberman shot 3 wild Pigeons." By 1878 the Commonwealth had taken legal action to protect the passenger pigeon, but this action came all too late.

Upon rare occasions he shares with us the thoughts evoked by the song of a bird when he writes "larks singing their morning matins reminding us to praise Him the Omnipotent." To concern oneself with the song of birds, with the scent of trees in blossom, with the beauty of sunsets or starlight may seem like trifling with time. Actually it is these timeless events, going on from year to year with little perceptible change, which lend a freshness and kinship to the diaries.

Folk notions about plant husbandry, the weather and home remedies have unusual longevity. Scattered throughout the diar-

ies are interesting bits of folklore. In an early entry, an Indian theory concerning winter is quoted "there is no winter until the ponds are full of water."¹ Alder had to be cut in December or January when no snow was on the ground.²

Signs such as "morning red" or "evening red", "moon a ring" or "Moon a halo in morning" continue to guide the weather-wise to this day. Less common are portents such as "Crows cawing before 7 A.M.", "Rooster crowing after 10 o'clock P.M." The Ember Days were carefully noted. A wet Ember Day indicated plenty of rain for three months following; a clear Ember Day, a dry season.³

Although the family doctor lived within walking distance of the Rank home and was a frequent visitor, he was not consulted when a home remedy prepared from cancer root, sassafras or elder was on hand. The Judge not only prepared remedies for the family but he made a salve or ointment which was sought after by folks in the community and the county.⁴ The Pennsylvania term "tetter" was used in referring to this salve which was used for various cutaneous ailments such as eczema or hives.⁵ When Rank recorded "Wolford got my Universal Book", September 12, 1873, he was very likely referring to Dr. Bennett's "Universal Heilmittel." This sixteen page pamphlet printed in Philadelphia, 1849, advertised a patent medicine and pretended to be a treatise of all diseases.⁶

According to Brendle and Unger bloodletting or cupping "was widely practiced both by physicians and laymen. It was resorted to as late as the second decade of the present century, in certain localities and individual cases, within recent years."⁷ Judge Rank

1. Diary, December 19, 1856.

2. *Ibid.*, December 10, 1856.

3. Grumbine, *Folklore and Superstitious Beliefs of Lebanon County in Lebanon County Historical Society Papers*, Vol. III No. 9, 285.

4. Rank, Diary May 27, 1853; July 15, 1853; Sept. 6, 1853; May 27, 1875.

5. Brendle and Unger, *Folk Medicine of the Pennsylvania Germans in Pennsylvania German Society Proceedings*, 1935, Vol. XLV, 59.

6. *Ibid.*, 225, 252.

7. *Ibid.*, 44.

was given this type of treatment by two local physicians, as he indicated in 1859, "got bled by J. C. Cooper" and as late as 1880, "Dr. Shultz over-got bled." There are a number of other references to this practice during the intervening years.

Associated with funeral rites were certain customs and observances no longer practiced. One such unusual custom is recorded in 1853, "to O. Conner Funeral—took tail of Pea Fowl", again in 1875, "went to funeral of Mrs. Desh took tail of Peacock."

On July 7, 1881, after a short illness the life of William Rank came to an end.¹ The funeral, held on July 10 in charge of the Masonic fraternity, was very largely attended: In attendance were "familiar faces from all parts of the county; men prominent in their locality, and representing both political parties."² They had come to pay their last respects to a man who had lived the good life; one who served well his and other communities. The Resolutions of the Lebanon County Bar Association express the sincere feeling of regret which was generally felt throughout the County at the time of his passing. These resolutions were unanimously adopted at a meeting held by the Association on July 8.³

"Resolved, First, That after a service upon the bench, extending over a longer term than any other active Associate in the State at the time of his death, and at the same time the eldest Associate upon the bench in the Commonwealth, the Judge was called away from this life in the golden evening of his days, leaving behind him a record of honesty, industry, faithful efficiency, and strict attention to his duty as the right hand of the Court, worthy of praise and without so much as the reflection of a shadow thereon; while his intercourse with the Bar and the officers of the Court was always marked by that rare combination of kindness, courtesy,

1. Lebanon Daily Times, July 8, 1881. Mrs. Rank preceded her husband in death on June 24, 1877.

2. Ibid. July 11, 1881.

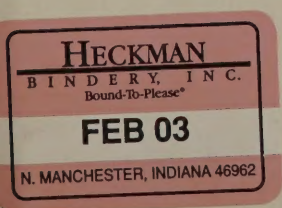
3. Lebanon Courier, July 13, 1881.

and urbanity, the type of the old-type gentleman, so peculiar to himself, characteristics which endeared him to all with whom he came in contact.

Second, That his constantly manifested desire that justice should be done and impartially administered secured for him the respect and unstinted esteem of the Court, the Bar, and suitors; and his ears and heart were always open to the cry of the distressed and oppressed.

Third, That the Bar joins the general community in its manifestation of sympathy for and condolences with the surviving members of the family of the Judge, at the death of their father, believing that the universal lament arising from all quarters of the County, at the removal of the "Father in Israel" will temper the severity of the blow thus fallen upon them.

Fourth, That we attend the funeral as a body, and that a copy of these resolutions be presented to the family of the deceased, and be entered upon the records of the Court." The Resolutions were signed by Bassler Boyer, J. G. Adams, Howard C. Shirk, Frank E. Meily, and L. F. Houck.



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